



**Testimony of
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Before the Government Administration and Elections Committee
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Common Cause in Connecticut is a nonpartisan, nonprofit citizen lobby that works to improve the way Connecticut's government operates. Common Cause has more than 400,000 members around the country and 36 state chapters. We have approximately 7200 members and activists in Connecticut.

We offer testimony today on the following bills:

HB 6163 An Act Concerning an Agreement Among the States to Elect the President of the United States by the National Popular Vote

HJ No. 33 Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Provide for Early Voting

HB 5233 An Act Concerning Grants from the Citizens' Election fund to Unopposed Candidates

HB 6163 An Act Concerning an Agreement Among the States to Elect the President of the United States by the National Popular Vote

The current system for electing our president no longer serves America well. Four times in our history the candidate who placed second in the popular vote was elected President of the United States. In addition, in 5 of the last 12 presidential elections (including 2004)ⁱ, a shift in a handful of votes in one or two states would have elected a second-place candidate.

The state-by-state method for choosing presidential electors divides the country into so-called "safe" states, where voters are all but ignored, while the election is determined by a relatively small number of swing voters in "battleground" states.

We need a system where everyone's vote counts equally.

Under the National Popular Vote (NPV) plan, states agree to allocate all of their electoral votes to the candidate who receives the most votes in all 50 states, but only if states with a combined total of 270 electoral votes join the agreement. Just as in every other election, every citizen's vote would then count equally.

When America's leader lacks the support of the majority of its citizens, we are a weaker country for it. The notion that some voters count more than others undermines the very principle of one-person, one-vote that democracy is based upon. Electing a second-place candidate weakens the legitimacy of our government and prevents citizens from coming together after bitter partisan battles to unite around a president who everyone agrees won the election fair and square. It contributes to the wave of cynicism and apathy which threaten the core assumptions of our republic.

At least 70% of Americans support moving a system of electing the president using the national popular vote in a 2009 Public Policy Poll.ⁱⁱ

The Constitution directs each state to select presidential elections however it sees fit and states have used a variety of methods for doing so throughout history. The Constitution also authorizes states to enter into binding agreements. So, states can mutually agree to use the national popular vote to choose electors within the existing constitutional framework.

Common Cause urges you to exercise your constitutional right by passing the National Popular Vote compact as swiftly as possible.

HJ Resolution No. 33 Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Provide for Early Voting

Common Cause supports HJ Resolution No. 33 as it addresses the important issue of allowing eligible voters to cast their votes regardless of whether or not they are able to appear at the polls. This is an important measure to ensure that all eligible voters vote.

Common Cause has worked for over four decades to ensure that existing barriers are removed ensuring voting rights for all Americans. This Resolution takes the essential step of amending the State Constitution to allow this change to take place.

HB 5233 An Act Concerning Grants from the Citizens' Election fund to Unopposed Candidates

As stands, Common Cause opposes the language of this bill. We support the substitute language offered by the State Elections Enforcement Commission for the reduction of grants to unopposed candidates.

We agree that there are solutions for the fiscal problems our state faces that will not endanger the continued success of the Citizens' Election Program, Connecticut's national model campaign finance reform.

As stated, "The reduction of grants for unopposed candidates should only be considered if it does not destroy the ability of the Program to meet its goals with respect to a large percentage of election races."

We urge you to continue to protect the on-going viability of the program that this legislature adopted in the wake of corruption scandals that rocked the state and cost not merely in dollars but in reputation and a resulting lack of confidence in government.

ⁱ 1824 (John Q. Adams - Andrew Jackson), 1876 (Tilden - Hayes), 1888 (Harrison - Cleveland), 2000, (Bush - Gore)

ⁱⁱ 73% of Connecticut Voters Support a National Popular Vote for President in April 2008 Poll.

<http://nationalpopularvote.com/resources/CT-NPV-Poll-Apr-19-20-2008-SHORT.pdf>

A survey of 797 Connecticut voters conducted April 19-20, 2008 showed 73%-27% support for a national popular vote for President.

By party, support for a national popular vote for President is 80%-20% among Democratic voters; 59%-41% among Republicans, and 76%-24% for Others.

By age, support is 76%-24% among 18-29 year olds; 67%-33% among 30-45 year olds; 72%-28% among 46-65 year olds; and 78%-22% among 65-and-older.

By gender, support is 81%-19% among women and 64%-36% among men.

By race, support is 73%-27% among whites, 71%-29% among African-Americans, 79%-21% among Hispanics, and 66%-34% among Others.

The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 1/2%.